

VETERANS ASSISTANCE COMMISSION OF COOK COUNTY

Membership Meeting Minutes

24 September 2024

Location:

**Robert E. Coulter Jr. American Legion Post 1941
900 South La Grange Road, La Grange, IL 60525**

(Executive Board Members): Frank Gutierrez (*President*), William Browne (*1st Vice President*), Dutch DeGroot (*2nd Vice President*), Robert Arciola (*Treasurer*).

At Large Board Members: Greg Jacobs, Wayne Kern, John Steciw. Non voting **Appointees** Jim Parker (*Secretary*), Kevin Ake (*Chaplain*), Gina A. LoGalbo (*Judge Advocate*), Lorenzo Fiorentino (*Sargent at Arms*). Elizabeth Soto (*Superintendent*)

I. Welcome – President Gutierrez.

- a. Call to order at 1901hrs.
- b. Roll Call/Quorum – 2nd VP DeGroot announced a quorum is attending per the sign in sheet. A copy of the Sign In Sheet is attached to and a part of these Minutes.
- c. President Gutierrez introduced the following guests: Director of the Cook County Veteran affairs Committee, Deanna Love, members of the DuPage VAC, Attorney Josh Herman and 9th District Cook County Commissioner, Maggie Trevor

II. Opening Reflection – Chaplain Kevin Ale

- a. Prayer/Reflection.
- b. Posting of the Colors/Pledge of Allegiance.

III. Public Comment.

- a. Larry Nazimek asked how many organizations have applied to become State Chartered? President Gutierrez replied that he did not think there were any but he will check to confirm.

IV. Consent Agenda – President Gutierrez.

- a. Approval of Minutes of June 25, 2024 Membership Meeting. The Minutes were not read but were distributed to all members in advance of this meeting. Motion to Approve the Minutes was made by Greg Jacobs and duly seconded. The motion was passed by unanimous voice vote.

V. Governance Report – Treasurer Aricola

- a. He reported that the Membership Corp. account balance of \$5,028.57 as of August 31, 2024.
- b. Ratification of Certain Executive Board Actions. Tabled to next meeting.

VI. VACCC Office Reports – Superintendent Elizabeth Soto read the Mission Statement of the VACCC reported the following for the second quarter:

- a. Financial & Disbursement Reports, Veterans Served & Race and Gender Reports and Monthly Outreach Report are in process and as such will be tabled to the next meeting.
- b. Communications/Website Update. Elizabeth announced that the VACCC Website is now up and running and thanked 2nd VP DeGroot for his efforts and work with County officials to get this done.
- c. Cook County HR and Staff Hiring Update. This year's goal is to add five full time positions and Elizabeth announced that the VACCC's first full time VSO has been hired. (thunderous)

applause!) She asked Victor Somoza to say a few words. Victor is a native Chicagoan and Army vet who served tours in Iraq and Afghanistan. He was awarded the Purple Heart for combat wounds that eventually resulted in a Medical Discharge. Victor thanked Elizabeth for the opportunity to serve as a VSO for the VACCC and looks forward to serving the vets of Cook County (more applause).

d. Goals. Superintendent Soto said among her current goals are to hire two to five new employees this quarter, including a Deputy Superintendent, an Outreach Coordinator and a person to work on Disability Claims, and to finalize the 2025 budget.

A motion to approve the Office Report was made by Greg Jacobs and duly seconded. The motion was passed by unanimous voice vote.

VII. Items for Membership Approval -- President Gutierrez

a. Resolution 24-01 regarding 2025 Budget approval and expenditure of funds pursuant thereto was introduced by Attorney Herman who gave the members an opportunity to review and comment on it. [Copies of the Resolution were distributed prior to the meeting.

There were a couple of audience questions that were answered satisfactorily. Motion to Adopt the Resolution was made by Art Ellington and duly seconded. The motion was passed by unanimous voice vote. A copy of the Resolution 24-01 attached and is posted on our web site <https://vaccookcounty.org/default.asp?pid=32905>. .

b. Motion to Yearly Evaluation of VACCC Superintendent.

[Copies of the Evaluation were distributed prior to the meeting.] Motion to Adopt Evaluation was made by Sec. Parker and duly seconded. The motion was passed by unanimous voice vote. A copy of the Evaluation attached and is posted on our web site <https://vaccookcounty.org/default.asp?pid=32905>.

VII. Bylaws – John Steciw

a. No report. Jim Schultz asked that a copy of the current By-laws be distributed to the members and President Gutierrez agreed to do so via email. A question also was raised about emails to members who do not have computers or use email. 2ndVP DeGroot said that he will send it to such members by mail if he is provide with her/his mailing address.

VIII. Budget – 1st VP Browne

a. No report at this time as the 2025 Budget has been approved but members will have the opportunity to serve on the Budget Committee next year.

IX. Services Provided Board Member Kern

a. Wayne Kern reported that he had some discussion with Larry Nazimek about two books that explain the structure of the Illinois state government and contain information for many key officials. Wayne then introduced Larry who briefly summarized each one and described how they can be useful to our members. Both books are available online. Wayne said if Larry would send him the links he (Wayne) would arrange to have the information included in these minutes. [Secretary's Note: Larry sent the links to Wayne who passed them along to me. The book titles and links appear below.

Illinois Blue Book:

https://www.ilsos.gov/publications/illinois_bluebook/home.html

Illinois Handbook of Government:

<https://www.ilsos.gov/publications/handbook/2324handbook.pdf>

X. Future Meeting Sites Update -- 2nd VP DeGroot

a. Lyons Twp. Post 1941, 6404 Joliet Road Countryside Il 60525, has agreed to this location for the December 17, 2024 (1900 hrs.) meeting.

XI. Old Business -- President Gutierrez

- a.** Report on the Membership Corporation. Tabled.

XII. New Business/ Additional Public Comments.– President Gutierrez.

- a.** Art Ellington said there is a severe shortage of Election Judges this year. He encouraged people to volunteer to help the County by performing a valuable service – and you get paid,
b. Ken McClory said that for most vets dentures and implants are not covered by the VA or SS. There is a company, Dental Services, that will do this for one-third the cost of regular dentists.
c. Chuck Bosko of AL Post 1941 said that the Post will host a Veterans Resource Fair in this build between 10am and 2pm on October 2. Lots of vendors will be there to introduce vets to their services. Elizabeth will attend on behalf of the VACCC. Medical services will be there to run tests and give flu shots. Everyone one is invited and, because it will be a free event, a full house is anticipated.

XIII. Comments from Special Guests:

- a.** President Gutierrez invited Commission Trevor to make a few comments. Ms. Trevor said that veterans concerns were also her concerns because her Dad was a WII vet. She also mentioned that she represents the 9th District where (we hope) the new building in River Grove will be located. Finally, she offered her Arlington Heights office as a meeting location for the VACCC if needed.
b. President Gutierrez also invited Director Love to speak. Ms. Love said that she was very pleased that the VACCC hired VSO Somoza and is looking forward to working with the VACCC to meet the needs of veterans throughout the County.

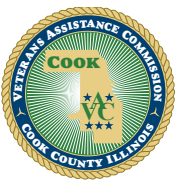
XIV. Presentation by VACCC Attorney Joshua Herman.

- a.** By way of background Mr. Herman said that he was raised in PA and after HS attended Bradley U. About that time, he signed up with the US Army reserves. Three days after graduation he was called up and deployed to Iraq. After discharge from active duty, he attended law school at IIT and U of I. After his admittance to the Bar, he joined a firm that specializes in representation units of government. His practice focuses on VACs. He is very pleased to be asked represent the VACCC. Mr. Herman then explained the need for going into Executive Session and the importance of doing so this evening. Among other things, it requires that all non-members be excused from the room. He the asked for a motion to go into Executive Session.
b. Art Ellington made a motion to go into Executive Session that was duly seconded. The motion was passed by unanimous voice vote at 1941hrs.
c. Mr. Herman explained that Executive Session is necessary for members to have a free, open and cordial discussion of topics that are sensitive.
d. A motion to close the Executive Session was made, seconded and approved by unanimous voice vote at 2020hrs.

XV. Adjournment.

President Gutierrez closed with a thank you to the Board , Members and guests for their contributions to a very productive meeting. Upon a proper Motion, duly seconded, the meeting was adjourned at 2038 hrs.

Submitted by Jim Parker, Secretary



VACCC MEMBERSHIP SIGN IN SHEET

24 SEPTEMBER 2024 MEETING

Organization	X	Delegate	X	Alternate Delegate
American Legion 36	X	Patrick Flannigan	X	Gregory Jacobs
American Legion 104	X	Michael F Tuman	X	Dennis Chavez
American Legion 183	X	Peter Papuc	X	Timothy Bodkin
American Legion 208	X	Greg Padovani		
American Legion 216	X	Kevin Ake		
American Legion 335		Lorenzo Fiorentino		Edward Castaneda
American Legion 525	X	William "Bill" Starr	X	Laura Matuszak
American Legion 615	X	Ken McClory	X	John Kaminecki
American Legion 758		Beau D. Butts	X	William M. Szura
American Legion 806		Dale Tippet	X	Pete Hirt
American Legion 943		John Steciw		Adam Bihun
American Legion 973		Eden Puente		
American Legion 974	X	Anthony Siciliano		Thomas Zito
American Legion 1941	X	Mike Maher	X	Carlos Medina
American Legion 1983	X	Mark Kwiatkowski	X	Antony (Tony) Thomas
AMVETS 66	X	James Schultz	X	James (Jim) Parker
AMVETS 268		Eddie Brown Jr.	X	Richard Nielson
JWV 710	X	Dr. Jerry Field		Howard Goldstein
MCL 553	X	Randall L. Tyner	X	Gina Ann LoGalbo
MOAA Chicago		Roman Golash		Warren D. Cuplin
Navy League Chicago 69		Leslie Rodriguez	X	Paul J. Bezazian
PVA Vaughan Chapter	X	Robert Arciola		Robert Statam
VFW 311	X	Bill Browne		Aretha Spurlock
VFW 981	X	Stewart Abblink		Timothy Delaney
VFW 1337	X	Wayne K. Kern	X	John "Dutch" DeGroot
VFW 2202	X	John Healy	X	Joe Wien
VFW 2868		EvaMarie Duff	X	Eric Moralas
VFW 3579	X	Ramon Prieto	X	Keith Renner
VFW 5979		Richard Wojewnik	X	David Ruiz
VFW 7186		Thomas J. "Jim" Hughes	X	Jason Kruger
VFW 8322	X	Frank Gutierrez		
VFW 9284	X	Arthur J. Ellingsen		Wallace Campbell
VFW 10778	X	Chuck Bosko		
VVA 242	X	Kevin Calkins		John B. Andres Jr.
30of 34 Organizations		23 Delegates		19 Alternate Delegates